



#8829

MYTHOLOGY OF MEXICO

Grade Levels: 5-12

23 minutes

VIDEO KNOWLEDGE, INC. 1996

DESCRIPTION

Introduces some of the mythologies of ancient Mexico, focusing on those of the Aztecs. Primary sources of these stories are old manuscripts, collected and illustrated by Spanish friars who came to convert the Indians. Retells some myths and beliefs, and concludes with one version of the legend of Quetzalcoatl.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Subject Area: United States History

- ◆ Standard: Understands cultural and ecological interactions among previously unconnected people resulting from early European exploration and colonization
 - Benchmark: Understands characteristics of the Spanish and Portuguese exploration and conquest of the Americas

Subject Area: World History

- ◆ Standard: Understands how the transoceanic interlinking of all major regions of the world between 1450 and 1600 led to global transformations
 - Benchmark: Understands features of Spanish exploration and conquest

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

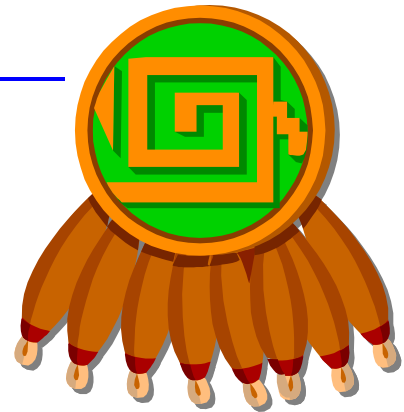
1. To depict the mythology of Mexico.
2. To evaluate the impact of pre-Spanish culture on modern Mexico.
3. To identify the gods of Aztecs, Mayas and Toltecs.
4. To present the polytheistic beliefs of ancient indigenous people of Mexico.

VOCABULARY

- | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|
| 1. artifacts | 7. headdress | 13. pageant |
| 2. Astronomy | 8. human sacrifice | 14. phonetically |
| 3. Christianity | 9. indigenous | 15. pre-Spanish |
| 4. codex | 10. legend | 16. saint |
| 5. convert | 11. myth | 17. serpent |
| 6. friar | 12. ocelot | 18. tradition |

BEFORE SHOWING

1. Locate the following places on a map of Mexico.
 - a. Mexico City
 - b. Seville
 - c. Tenochtitlan
 - d. Teotihuacan
2. Determine the number of miles between Spain and Mexico.
3. Discuss the Spanish conquering of Mexico.
 - a. How did the Spaniards travel to Mexico?
 - b. In what ways were the Spaniards and indigenous Mexico people ill prepared for their cross cultural encounter?
 - c. What would have been necessary to make the meetings of these two cultures have a more positive outcome?
4. Introduce the following primary characters related to Mexican mythology:
 - a. Cortez
 - b. Montezuma

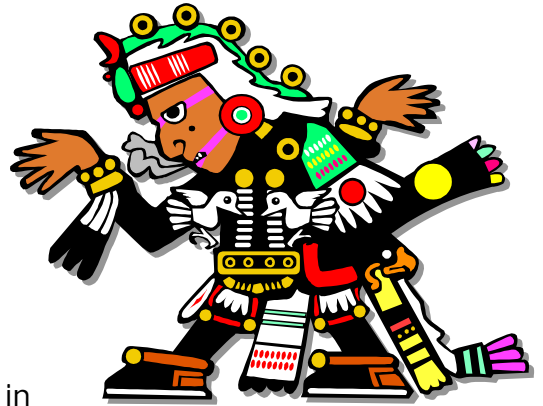


AFTER SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

1. Evaluate the role of myth in the eventual demise of the Toltec, Aztec and Mayan societies.
2. Discuss Mexico's indigenous people.
3. Discuss the role of Christian friars in Mexico.
 - a. What was the motivation of these friars to make the trip to Mexico?
 - b. What role did they play in preserving Aztec culture?
 - c. How did conversion to Christianity affect the indigenous people?
4. Describe codices.
 - a. In what way are codices invaluable to the study of Aztec history, culture and mythology?
 - b. Who wrote codices?
 - c. How were codices made?
 - d. What was the purpose for codices?
 - e. Who provided the cultural and linguistic input for codices?
 - f. What were typical dimensions of a codex?
 - g. How were codices named?
5. Discuss the ancient Mexican gods: Aztec (Ehecatl, Mictlantecuhtli), Mayan (Huitzilopochtli).
 - a. What was the domain of this god?
 - b. How were they depicted?
 - c. Why did these gods so closely deal with nature?
 - d. How did the gods help the people to deal with natural disaster?

6. Discuss Mayan civilization.
 - a. Why did the arrival of the Spanish have no effect on the Mayas?
 - b. Why is almost nothing known of the Mayas?
 - c. How is any information at all known about the Mayas?
7. Discuss the ancient city of Teotihuacan.
 - a. Who currently occupies this city?
 - b. What happened to the inhabitants of this city?
 - c. What are the three main sections of this city?
8. Summarize the Aztec version of the history of the world. Include future predictions.
 - a. What are the four worlds?
 - b. How did each world end?
9. Describe how the religious beliefs of the ancient Mexican people influenced their interaction with the Spanish.
 - a. How did fatalism influence the ancient peoples?
 - b. How did the arrival of the Spanish coincide with their religious beliefs?
10. Evaluate how the arrival of the Spaniards in 1619 changed Mexico. Why was it not difficult for the Spaniards to present themselves as gods?
11. Describe how the ancient beliefs and history of the indigenous people affects Mexico today.
 - a. Where can the remains of these cultures be seen?
 - b. How have these beliefs influenced modern day Mexican culture and religion?



Applications and Activities

1. Dramatize a war crimes trial of the Spanish conquest of Mexico.
 - a. Include testimony, deliberation and findings.
 - b. Consider individual prominent conquistadors in addition to Catholic friars and common foot soldiers.
 - c. Evaluate the affect of the indigenous people's beliefs on the conquering.
2. Debate the effects of religious conversion on a culture.
 - a. Should world cultures and religions remain pure and distinct?
 - b. What value is there in melding or merging cultural and religious beliefs?
 - c. In what ways is modern technology affecting the interaction between various cultures and religions of the world?
 - d. How do linguists and religious workers partner in recording and legitimizing a culture?
3. Create a codex of Mayan or Toltec culture that measures seven inches wide and up to 16 feet in length.
 - a. Determine if the codex will be a historical record, fiction, mythological, religious or astronomical.

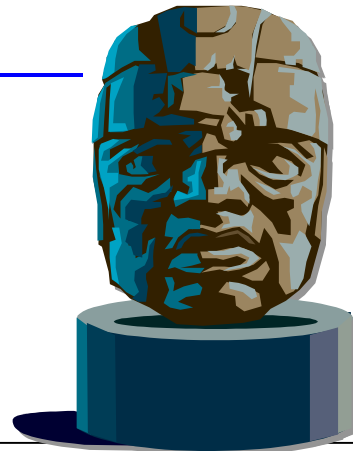
- b. Use resources to gather as much information as possible regarding Mayan and Toltec life.
4. Compare stories from ancient cultures. Consider the following kinds of stories:
 - a. Origin of life
 - b. Destruction of the world by flood, fire, winds and rampaging wild beasts
 - c. Nature including wind, rain, lightning and fertility
5. Create a map to the ancient city of Teotihuacan that includes the pyramid of the sun, the pyramid of the moon, the Avenue of the Dead and answers the following questions:
 - a. Why is the Avenue of the Dead a misnomer?
 - b. What kind of activities may have taken place in this city?
 - c. What may have caused the city to become deserted?
6. Dramatize the story of Quetzalcoatl.
 - a. Use costumes that depict his powers and beliefs.
 - b. Include the religious leaders desire to keep human sacrifice.
7. Rewrite history by making a plan to merge the best of the Spanish and indigenous Mexican people's culture.

RELATED RESOURCES



Captioned Media Program

- The Aztecs #3567
- Mexico #3637
- Mexico: The Land and the People #2200
- Tracing Your Roots: The Rulelas Family #8573



World Wide Web



The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid-safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **THE ANCIENT CULTURE WEB**

<http://www.julen.net/ancient>

Categories include: archaeology, art, buildings, monuments, cities, daily life, language, literature, law, mythology and religion.

- **ENCYCLOPEDIA MYTHICA**

<http://www.pantheon.org/mythica.html>

An encyclopedia of mythology and folklore. Includes information regarding Mayan and Aztec gods and stories of the gods.

- **QUETZALCOATL PAPERS**

<http://www.highfiber.com/~nahualli/index.htm>

Provides exhaustive information regarding this primary character in Mexican mythology.

- **ANCIENT MESOAMERICAN CIVILIZATIONS**

<http://www.angelfire.com/ca/humanorigins/>

Includes information on Aztec and Mayan government and religion in addition to similar information on people throughout the now Spanish speaking Americans.